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New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 7 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

The President: Members will recall that at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 15 September 2017, the General Assembly decided to allocate agenda item 99 to the First Committee. To enable the General Assembly to proceed with the high-level meeting under that agenda item, may I take it that the Assembly wishes to consider agenda item 99 directly in plenary meeting and proceed immediately to its consideration?

It was so decided.

High-level meeting to commemorate and promote the International Day against Nuclear Tests

Agenda item 99 (*continued*)

General and complete disarmament

Statement by the President

The President: We are here to commemorate the International Day against Nuclear Tests. We have done this many times, but today is a first because we are meeting in the setting of a formal high-level meeting, and we have the efforts of Kazakhstan to thank for that. In opening our event today, I shall make three main points.

First, I want to point to the realities. The previous century saw massive advancements in nuclear science and technology. That has led to many benefits, but also to indescribable pain. I am not just talking about the horrific suffering of the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, because the problems do not come about only when bombs are detonated.

Nuclear tests began in 1945, and since then almost 2,000 have taken place. Some of them, unfortunately, happened not that long ago. A huge price has been paid by people — through cancer, disability and death — and by the planet, from the contamination of natural resources. Our keynote speaker, Mr. Karipbek Kuyukov, has dedicated his life to warning us about those effects. Nuclear tests pose another risk as well, a political one. Simply put, they do not build trust. Instead they escalate tensions, create openings for political miscalculations and bring us closer to the brink. That is the reality when it comes to nuclear testing, and it shows why today's meeting is vital for our planet and for humankind.

For my second point, I turn to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), as it offers us our best shot at making nuclear tests a thing of the past. The Treaty has still not entered into force, however, more than 20 years after its opening for signature. We need to acknowledge the near-universal moratoriums on nuclear tests, which have resulted from States' own willingness, and should be welcomed. And we need to draw hope from the developments on the Korean peninsula. But voluntary moratoriums and developments on the ground are not enough. We need a legally binding system and a clear verification mechanism, and we need the CTBT to enter into force. In that regard, I want to praise Thailand

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for its recent ratification — that is positive momentum. But I also call on the eight States whose ratifications are required for the Treaty to enter into force to do so, urgently.

For my third and final point, I turn to the situation on the Korean peninsula. Things looked bleak this time last year. Tensions were high. Rhetoric was loud. And all we were speaking about were the risks. Now we can see the opportunities. Positive steps have been taken by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, including the suspension of its nuclear tests and launches of inter-continental ballistic missiles, as well as the closure of a nuclear test site. That came about through the efforts of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea and the United States, as well as other partners.

I hope we now see more tangible action. Verification is crucial for progress, and the conditions must therefore be put in place for it to happen. There is no doubt that signing and ratifying the CTBT would lead to progress on the Korean peninsula. We all know that there is a long road ahead that will present challenges, but I hope that we have already taken the first steps.

No, we are not living in a world free from nuclear tests. But if we all play our part, do everything we can and put humankind first — and that applies to Governments, the United Nations system and civil society alike — we can see the CTBT enter into force.

I now invite the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, to make a statement.

The Secretary-General: I am very pleased to be here for this important observance. Last month, I visited Japan and met with survivors of the atomic-bomb attack on Nagasaki. Through the testimony of the survivors, the *hibakusha*, we are reminded of the need to ensure that nuclear weapons are never used again. On the annual observance of the International Day against Nuclear Tests, we highlight the inextricable connection between testing and the elimination of nuclear weapons. We also remember the victims of the disastrous era of widespread nuclear testing. The legacy of more than 2,000 nuclear tests has affected people and communities in many regions, from the residents of Semipalatinsk and the steppe of Kazakhstan to South Pacific islanders and the Maralinga Tjarutja people of southern Australia. They include some of the world's most vulnerable communities in some of the most fragile areas of the planet, from an environmental point of view.

The catastrophic impact of nuclear testing has had profound effects on the environment, human health, food security and economic development. That is why we should all welcome the robust norm against nuclear testing that has developed since the end of the Cold War, including through the voluntary moratoriums implemented by most States possessing nuclear weapons. Since the turn of the century only one State has breached that norm, and through the Security Council, the international community has responded decisively to each of its violations. But what the nuclear tests conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have shown is that no ad hoc measure can replace a global, legally binding ban on nuclear testing. Every effort must be made to bring about the immediate entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

As I state in *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*, the CTBT has an essential role to play within the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. By constraining the development and qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons, the Treaty puts a brake on the nuclear arms race. It serves as a powerful barrier against States that might seek to develop, manufacture, use or acquire nuclear weapons in violation of their non-proliferation commitments. Yet more than 20 years after it was negotiated, the Treaty has yet to enter into force. That failure prevents its full implementation and undermines its permanence within the international security architecture.

I reiterate the appeal I made when I launched my disarmament agenda for the remaining eight States whose ratifications are required for the CTBT to enter into force to commit to signing the Treaty and completing their ratification processes. I urge all of them not to wait for others to act before moving forward. A complete and verifiable end to all nuclear tests is a vital pillar of a world free of nuclear weapons, a safer and more secure world for all. I am convinced we can achieve that, and I am ready to provide whatever assistance is needed to attain that goal.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

Before proceeding further, I should like to consult Members with a view to inviting Mr. Lassina Zerbo,

Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, and Mr. Karipbek Kuyukov, Honorary Ambassador of the ATOM Project, to make statements today.

If there is no objection, may I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly, without setting a precedent, to invite those speakers to make statements at this commemorative meeting?

It was so decided.

The President: In accordance with the decision just taken, I now give the floor to Mr. Lassina Zerbo, Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization.

Mr. Zerbo (Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization): Let me begin by expressing my sincere thanks to His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák for his invitation to deliver a keynote statement during today's high-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate and promote 29 August as the International Day against Nuclear Tests. A day against nuclear tests is meant to promote a world without nuclear tests and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). I am also pleased to share the rostrum with my good friend Karipbek Kuyukov, Honorary Ambassador of the ATOM Project. He is an incredible inspiration for all those who have dedicated their lives to abolishing nuclear testing as a crucial step towards a world free from nuclear weapons.

We were both in Astana last week to participate in the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization's 2018 Youth International Conference, along with a group of eminent persons. The five-day Conference, on the theme "Remembering the past, looking into the future", provided a platform for renowned experts in nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, and young leaders pursuing careers in those areas, to reflect on the history and consequences of nuclear-weapon testing. Participants also engaged in substantive discussions aimed at promoting the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as the ultimate means for ensuring that destructive practice is forever abandoned.

The adoption on 2 December 2009 of resolution 64/35, which established the International Day against Nuclear Tests, represented the culmination of efforts by Kazakhstan and many other like-minded countries to acknowledge the vital importance of the decision made by President Nursultan Nazarbayev to close the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site on 29 August 1991. More than 450 nuclear-test explosions were conducted at that site between 1949, the year of the first nuclear test by the Soviet Union, and 1989. Following the end of the Cold War and the breakup of the former Soviet Union, one of the first decisions of the newly independent Republic of Kazakhstan was to renounce nuclear weapons and transfer its inherited arsenal to the Russian Federation. That was a demonstration of bold leadership in an uncertain time and showed that a nation's national security need not be based on the possession of weapons of mass destruction. Kazakhstan's leading role in nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament issues continues to this day, and we should be thankful for the example that it has provided.

First-hand accounts of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki from survivors, the *hibakusha*, have helped cement in our minds the horrors of the use of nuclear weapons in warfare. Likewise, recognizing the impact of nuclear-weapon testing on populations in proximity to nuclear test sites should galvanize the international community to band together to end nuclear testing for all time. The consequences of nuclear testing for humans and the environment should always inform our collective efforts to bring them to an end, but we must also consider that a complete and verifiable ban on nuclear testing is but one step on the path towards our ultimate objective of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Since the dawn of the atomic age, explosive nuclear testing has constituted a critical aspect of nuclear weapon development. Nuclear testing fueled the nuclear arms race, producing increasingly sophisticated and powerful weapons that could be delivered anywhere in the world with incredible speed and precision. Thanks to the work of the dedicated scientists, diplomats, politicians and members of civil society who fought tirelessly for a comprehensive nuclear-test ban, we now have in our toolbox one of the oldest and most sought-after items on the arms-control agenda. Thanks to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, we have transitioned away from a world in which nuclear tests were carried out with near-impunity.

Since the CTBT opened for signature in 1996, the world has benefited from the strongly established de facto international norm against nuclear testing, as Secretary-General Guterres mentioned today. Of the 183 States that have signed the Treaty, 164 have ratified it. Only three countries have violated this norm since

1996 and only one country has tested nuclear weapons in this century.

On the verification side, the Treaty's international monitoring system — consist ofing 337 facilities utilizing seismic, hydroacoustic, infrasound and radionuclide technologies — has been more than 90 per cent completed to date. It has a truly global reach and is supported by the International Data Centre in Vienna, which continuously processes and analyses data. That data is shared with 1,300 institutions and more than 130 countries throughout the world. On several occasions, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty verification has proved to be more than capable of meeting the verification requirements of the Treaty; indeed, the current detection threshold is far better than many thought would be possible when the Treaty was negotiated.

The performance of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty verification regime has demonstrated that no State can confidently conduct a clandestine nuclear-test explosion in violation of the Treaty without detection. For this reason and more, the Treaty is a core element of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. It is also a key means of advancing nuclear disarmament. An effectively verifiable, credible and foreseeable prohibition on nuclear testing must be part of any viable legal framework for nuclear disarmament. In this way, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is the most practical and necessary step towards the broader vision of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

While the successful negotiation and adoption of the CTBT will always be considered a hard-fought victory, complete success will elude us until the Treaty enters into force and is universalized. This is why the International Day against Nuclear Tests must be not only for remembrance and reflection, but also for a call for action. There are eight remaining States that have to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to achieve its entry into force: China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, India, Israel, Iran, Pakistan and the United States. Given what we know about the devastating consequences of nuclear testing for humans, the environment and international peace and security, I do not think it is unfair to say that each of these countries has a moral imperative to help us to achieve a world free of nuclear tests. While the political circumstances surrounding the CTBT remain challenging, there is no doubt about the organization's technical ability to provide effective verification of a nuclear-test ban. Moreover, even before its entry into force, the Treaty's verification regime can be utilized by the international community.

I also believe that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea missed out on an opportunity to provide additional confidence on the closure of the Punggye-ri nuclear test site. While the closure of the site is welcome, the process would have benefited significantly from the involvement of technical experts in adequately assessing the activities undertaken to dismantle the site. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization's tools, technologies and expertise for providing site characterization prior to the closure activity to assess the state of the site are available. They could be used even now to provide a reference point for future monitoring as part of post-site closure and dismantlement verification.

Looking back over the years since the first International Day against Nuclear Tests in 2010, one would be forgiven for harbouring a sense of despair and anxiety over the downward turn in global security and stability. Without a doubt, the world has changed. We face increasing risks and growing tensions, while cooperation and collaboration on nuclear-threat reduction at the highest political levels seem to be in short supply. Resolution 64/35 of 2009, declaring 29 August as the International Day against Nuclear Tests, welcomes the then-recent positive momentum among the international community towards a nuclear weapon-free world. Unfortunately, that momentum, generated by a unity of vision among nations towards nuclear disarmament, has all but faded.

But should this stark reality lessen our determination or lull us into complacency? Absolutely not. As we mark the International Day against Nuclear Tests, let us strengthen our resolve and sharpen our focus. The acknowledgement that our international institutions and instruments are potentially at risk should give us all the more reason to demand urgent action. And the most sensible place to start is the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty — a measure that will produce tangible benefits for humankind.

The abolition of nuclear tests will provide a basis for strategic stability and regional and global security. The Treaty's verification technologies and monitoring data are also being explored and exploited to advance scientific knowledge and our understanding of the world around us, and to help prevent and mitigate

natural disasters. These areas include tsunami early-warning systems, climate-change research, volcanic-ash alerts for air travel safety and much more.

With every signature and ratification, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty becomes stronger and the international norm against nuclear testing is further solidified. All members of our community of nations can contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security through their adherence to and support for the Treaty. Each and every ratification brings us closer to our shared objective of a universal prohibition on nuclear tests by anyone anywhere, for all time. By signing and ratifying the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, every country helps to consolidate political will in favour not only of the Treaty but of non-proliferation and disarmament more broadly.

Participation in the Treaty and its verification regime helps enhance international technical cooperation in security areas. Saying "never" to nuclear testing through the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty strengthens the case for multilateral solutions to the transnational challenges of the twenty-first century. While Governments will ultimately make the final decision on ratification, we must also recognize the vital role of international organizations, civil society, academia and the mass media in helping to inform the discussion and shape the debate. Educational initiatives to promote awareness and understanding of the threat of nuclear weapons and the importance of tools such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to combat them must also be encouraged and supported. That is particularly true with regard to the next generation. Young people today are already helping to shape the future, and we need their help if we are to reach our goal of a world without the threat of nuclear weapons. They bring enthusiasm, determination and passion to the cause. They are conducting vital research that will shed light on political, legal and scientific issues, which will be essential in the drive to finally put an end to nuclear testing.

I appeal to all countries, large or small, that have not yet signed or ratified the Treaty to do so without hesitation, to join the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and be part of the historic movement to ensure that nuclear tests never again endanger human lives or the world's natural resources. They should help us put in place one of the most important and necessary building blocks of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The President: In accordance with the decision just taken, I now give the floor to the Honorary Ambassador of the ATOM Project.

Mr. Kuyukov (ATOM Project) (*spoke in Russian*): This is a very important day in my life. I would like to thank everyone who has given me the opportunity to address the Assembly today. I am speaking on behalf of all those who have survived or been killed by nuclear weapons. Everything I say today will be another reminder of Kazakhstan's bitter experience of the full horror and pain of nuclear tests.

My story about the struggle against nuclear weapons began in 1968, in the small village of Yegindybulak, 100 kilometres from the Semipalatinsk Polygon, where a boy was born without arms. On 29 August 1949, the Council of Ministers of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had decided to establish the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, where the first tests of nuclear weapons manufactured by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics were conducted. Thousands of native Kazakh families living in the test site area became hostages to radiation exposure. For the first nuclear tests, military engineers prepared a so-called test field and a nuclear charge was placed at its centre. Military equipment — tanks, aircraft and armoured vehicles — was installed not far from that epicentre. Animal test subjects — sheep, pigs and dogs — were housed in the many fallout shelters, and, of course, there were people who lived and worked around the nuclear test site for 40 years while nuclear explosions were being conducted. It was all done for research into the power of the destructive force of nuclear explosions. My family still remembers how our house shook when a radiation wave from an explosion passed under us.

As a creative person, I have expressed my pain and protest by painting pictures, holding the brush between my teeth or my toes. I recently turned 50, and I have dedicated the last 25 years of my life to the fight against nuclear weapons. Our country has a moral right to promote global anti-nuclear initiatives. I am currently an Honorary Ambassador of the ATOM project, which was established through an initiative of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The efforts of President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan in that area have been met with understanding and support from the international community. Through his decree closing the Semipalatinsk Polygon, he showed the world that Kazakhstan had chosen a path of peace and virtue, a worthy example for other countries to follow.

On behalf of the victims of nuclear weapons, I would like to ask the leaders and lawmakers of countries such as Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, China, Pakistan and the United States to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and to help us ensure that future generations are protected from the harmful effects of nuclear testing. The time has come to change the world for the better. Only through joint efforts will we be able to achieve a complete ban on nuclear testing. That is why the ATOM Project was created. On its website there is an online petition asking countries' leaders to work for a nuclear-weapon-free world. The number of people who have signed the petition so far stands at more than 312,000, from more than 100 countries. Our goal is to collect a million signatures. Anyone can sign the petition on the Project's website, at www.theatomproject.org, and thereby contribute to building a world without nuclear weapons.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, and Mr. Kairat Umarov, the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations, for enabling me to speak about this issue once again and thereby gain the attention of the entire international community. It will undoubtedly serve as an additional impetus to advancing the common cause of a ban on nuclear testing around the world. We must learn from history's bitterest lessons about the consequences of nuclear testing and strive for the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kenya, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Amayo (Kenya): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of African States.

The African Group would like to express its appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting and for your support to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and to nuclear disarmament in general. We would also like to commend Mr. Lassina Zerbo, the Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization, and his committed team for their tireless efforts to promote the Treaty and build up its verification regime.

The fact that we are meeting here today is a demonstration of our willingness and determination to see an end to nuclear tests. To that end, the African Group supports the goals of the CTBT, the aim of which is enforcing a comprehensive ban on nuclear tests, with all their attendant ramifications. Indeed, nuclear test explosions have devastating effects on the terrestrial environment. We are all duty-bound to protect the environment by respecting the moratorium on nuclear testing as we work assiduously to achieve the entry into force of the CTBT.

The total elimination of nuclear weapons remains the only absolute guarantee against their use or threat of use. In that context, the Group reiterates the urgent need for our planet, including outer space, to be free of nuclear weapons, as their presence constitutes an existential threat to global peace and the future survival of humankind. In that connection, the Group notes the 2017 award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.

The African Group supports the principle of complete nuclear disarmament as the most essential prerequisite for maintaining international peace and security. In that spirit, we would like to recall here the historical adoption of the landmark Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on 7 July 2017. We would therefore like to urge all States to support the Treaty by signing and ratifying it as soon as possible. We hope that all members of the international community, including nuclear-weapon States and those under their nuclear shield, will seize the opportunity to pursue the goal of a nuclear-free world.

The African Group looks forward to the General Assembly's fifth high-level meeting in commemoration of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, on 26 September, and underscores its importance as an integral part of the multilateral disarmament effort.

The Group restates its deep concern about the slow rate of progress on the part of nuclear-weapon States towards achieving the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, in accordance with their legal obligations and undertakings under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The Group therefore insists on the nuclear-weapon States' implementation of all measures and undertakings agreed to in the context of the NPT.

The African Group underscores the contribution of nuclear-weapon-free zones around the world to the overall objectives of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, thereby enhancing global and

regional peace and security. In that context, the African Group reiterates its commitment to the Treaty of Pelindaba, which reaffirms the status of Africa as a nuclear-weapon-free zone and as a shield for the African territory, including by preventing the stationing of nuclear explosive devices on the continent and prohibiting the testing of those weapons in the entire space that constitutes the African continent.

The African Group would also like to restate its deep concern that the commitments and obligations related to the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, including the action plan of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, have not been fulfilled. In particular, we remain deeply disappointed by the inability to convene the agreed conference on the establishment of a zone in the Middle East free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, which was scheduled to be held in 2012.

The Group further stresses that the 1995 resolution remains an integral and essential part of the package and the basis on which the NPT was indefinitely extended, and we underline the continued validity of that resolution until its objectives are achieved. The Group reiterates its regrets that the ninth NPT Review Conference was unable to agree on a final outcome document, despite the concerted efforts of non-nuclear-weapon States, particularly in Africa. As preparations for the tenth NPT Review Conference have begun, with the first session of the Preparatory Commission held in May 2017, the Group calls on all States to work to actualize the goals and objectives of the Treaty.

The African Group underscores the inalienable right of States to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and highlights the central role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in providing technical assistance and cooperation and maximizing the use of science and technology for socioeconomic development, as well as in monitoring States' commitments to the implementation of the IAEA safeguards agreement.

The Group stresses the importance of nuclear knowledge-sharing and the transfer of nuclear technology to developing countries, including African countries, and highlights the potential contribution of nuclear energy to promoting sustainable development and prosperity across the world. The Group stresses that the IAEA Technical Cooperation Programme, as the main vehicle for the transfer of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, should continue to be formulated and implemented in accordance with its statute.

The Group further wishes to emphasize the importance of humanitarian considerations in the context of all deliberations on nuclear weapons, and particularly its concerns about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use or detonation of nuclear weapons, either by accident or as a deliberate action. The Group calls on all States, particularly nuclear-weapon States, to take into consideration the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of such weapons on human health, the environment and vital economic resources, among other things, and to take the measures necessary to dismantle and renounce such weapons.

The African Group would like to reiterate that universal adherence to the CTBT offers a way to end the further development and proliferation of nuclear weapons, thereby contributing to the goal of nuclear disarmament. The Group acknowledges the overwhelming support of the international community in promoting the entry into force of the CTBT, and calls on States that have not yet signed or ratified it, as listed in annex 2 of the Treaty, to do so without further delay.

In conclusion, the African Group once again calls on all States to work diligently to facilitate the expeditious entry into force of the CTBT in order to fulfil the goal and objective of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The President: I now call on the representative of Georgia, who will speak on behalf of Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Imnadze (Georgia): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Seventy-three years since the first nuclear-weapon tests, in 1945, we gather to pay tribute to the victims of nuclear explosions and reaffirm our commitment to ending nuclear testing, which is a threat to human existence, the environment and all forms of life.

The world has witnessed the tragic consequences of around 2,000 nuclear tests conducted prior to the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996. Today there is no doubt that nuclear tests represent a threat to international peace and security and undermine existing non-proliferation regimes. The historic closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site 27 years ago was

an important milestone on our common path towards increased awareness of that issue.

However, in spite of all the efforts and commitments made by the international community to date, the threat of the testing and misuse of nuclear weapons is still a reality in the twenty-first century. Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation remain our goal. The speedy entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is vital to the effectiveness of the nuclear-disarmament and non-proliferation regimes.

As we commemorate the International Day against Nuclear Tests, we call on all States that have yet to sign or ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, particularly the annex 2 States, to do so without further delay. Pending the entry into force of the CTBT, we also urge all States to refrain from conducting any action contrary to the object and purpose of the Treaty. Mindful of the dangerous developments in recent years on the Korean peninsula, we urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to sign and ratify the CTBT without delay, comply with its provisions and end nuclear testing.

Let me conclude by stressing that a safe and peaceful world should be entirely free of nuclear tests.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Oman, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

Mr. Al Harthy (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am delighted to make this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States on the International Day against Nuclear Tests. This is an important event that confirms the desire and commitment of the international community to putting an end to nuclear tests, which have terrorized humankind and caused lasting environmental damage.

I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this meeting. I also applaud the statement delivered by the Secretary-General, as well as the important points made by the Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. I further commend the subsequent statements, all of which agree that there is an urgent need to eliminate all threats posed by nuclear weapons, which are without a doubt the category of weapon that is most contrary to humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law.

The Arab Group underscores that the issue of nuclear weapons and the existential threat of their possession must be addressed from a global perspective with a view to completely eliminating them, along with other complementary measures such as nuclear test bans and the disposal of weapons-grade fissile material. The total, complete and irreversible elimination of nuclear weapons is the major guarantee that nuclear tests will not be conducted by any country in the future.

The Arab Group believes that the continued existence of nuclear weapons and the failure to implement article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as well as of other related and binding commitments that have been adopted at various NPT Review Conferences to achieve its universalization, represent a serious threat to international peace and security.

The Arab Group categorically refuses to accept the idea that the possession of nuclear weapons is important to international stability, or that the prevailing international circumstances are not conducive to making progress on implementing nuclear-disarmament commitments related to. In reality, if we look closely at the challenges currently posed by nuclear proliferation, it is clear that if we had a world free of nuclear weapons, they could have been better addressed and might not even have existed.

Once again, we call on nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their responsibilities in order to implement their agreed objectives and commitments and eliminate their nuclear arsenals in accordance with a specific timetable. That is the least that States that have conducted nuclear tests can do in order to compensate the international community for the ongoing serious damage caused by their thousands of nuclear tests.

Although the Middle East is a region of tension and instability, the Arab States have demonstrated their good intentions by acceding to the NPT and by implementing their commitments in that regard. They also actively participated in the negotiations on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and continue to support the implementation of a verification regime related to the CTBT, which has made tangible progress and is even ready to be experimentally operational.

Nevertheless, the Middle East remains one of the most prominent examples of the challenges faced by the non-proliferation regime. That is due to the non-universalization of the NPT and Israel's obstinate defiance of the international community and refusal to implement the relevant international resolutions

and comply with the norms and rules set forth by the NPT. At the same time, some international Powers turn a blind eye to that abnormal situation and continue to provide Israel with a political umbrella. Such irregularities in the security system leave the region subject to conflicts and an arms race. Consequently, the Arab States are feeling unprecedented frustration at the recurrent failure to achieve the objective of making the region free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, as well as the non-fulfilment of agreed commitments in that regard.

The Arab Group looks forward to the revitalization of multilateral efforts to remedy that irregularity in our region by implementing agreed commitments, in particular the creation of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, in accordance with the relevant resolution adopted at the 1995 NPT review conference; Security Council resolutions 487 (1981) and 678 (1990); and the dozens of resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency in that regard.

Several recent developments, particularly the inclusion of the humanitarian commitment in many General Assembly resolutions, as well as the historic adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear weapons, which complements the objectives of the NPT and the CTBT, are clear signs that the situation has changed at the international level. Those developments send the message that non-nuclear-weapon States that are genuinely committed to the principle of denuclearization have begun to look for new ways to take serious measures to fill the gaps and address the irregularities that exist within the current disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Those States are also addressing the threats resulting from the continued possession of nuclear weapons by a limited number of countries, including the risks arising from nuclear detonations, which pose an existential threat. The United Nations must address that thoroughly in order to rid the world and future generations of those weapons. The Arab Group believes that the total elimination of those weapons is not only a realistic and achievable objective, but also a sine qua non for the lasting preservation of international peace and security.

The President: I now call on the representative of Australia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Ms. Bird (Australia): I am delivering this statement on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty: Canada, Finland, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands and my own country, Australia. We thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting and the Secretary-General for his statement today.

The very existence of this International Day is testament to the de facto norm against nuclear testing. The Group of Friends is committed to achieving the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), thereby making a legal and verifiable end to the testing of nuclear weapons and other nuclear devices. The CTBT is a core element of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime. Its entry into force will contribute to the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Now with 183 signatures and 166 ratifications, the CTBT is among the world's best-subscribed treaties. We invite all Member States to join us at the forthcoming CTBT Group of Friends ministerial meeting on 27 September, where we hope to welcome news of a further ratification. Thailand's announced intention to ratify soon marks a significant regional milestone for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to celebrate, with all its members having ratified the CTBT. That sends a strong message to other regions to follow suit.

Pending the entry into force of the CTBT, we call on all States to maintain the moratorium on nuclear-weapon test explosions and other nuclear explosions and to refrain from any action that would undermine the Treaty's object and purpose.

In past CTBT ministerial meetings, we have consistently condemned the six nuclear-weapon tests conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea since 2006. In order to realize the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula in a peaceful manner, we again urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to comply fully with all of its international non-proliferation obligations, including the relevant Security Council resolutions. We also call on all Member States to fully implement the relevant Security Council resolutions.

We welcome recent positive developments, including the April inter-Korean summit and the United States-Democratic People's Republic of Korea summit in Singapore in June. We note the 20 April announcement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that it intended to suspend nuclear and missile

tests, and its May statement to the Conference on Disarmament that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would join international disarmament efforts for a total ban on nuclear tests. We further note the announced destruction of the Punggye-ri nuclear test site on 24 May. We now urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to sign and ratify the CTBT as a matter of priority.

We welcome advances made by the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization in ensuring that the Treaty's verification regime is robust and world-class. Almost 300 certified International Monitoring System (IMS) stations are now operating worldwide. The IMS has proved its ability to promptly and accurately detect nuclear tests, and it also makes an important contribution through its scientific and civilian applications. All States signatories must remain committed to supporting the completion and maintenance of all elements of the CTBT's verification regime and related capacity-building activities.

Finally, we welcome the call in the Secretary-General's disarmament agenda to make every effort to ensure the CTBT's early entry into force. Its vital importance has only increased since its opening for signature. We urge all States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty without delay, especially the remaining eight annex 2 States — China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, Pakistan and the United States of America. We appeal to all States to make every effort to achieve the entry into force of the CTBT, bring a definitive end to nuclear testing and take us a step closer to our shared goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

The President: I now call on the representative of the Philippines, who will speak on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Mr. Locsin (Philippines): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

We welcome Thailand's upcoming ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) later this month. The ratification of the CTBT by all ASEAN member States solidifies and bolsters our strong commitment to the international norm against nuclear testing, as well as our steadfast support to the CTBT.

ASEAN denounces the conduct of nuclear-weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosions, which are contrary to international efforts and norms against nuclear testing, non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. We reiterate our recognition of the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons, which is the basis of our efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons. Bearing in mind the significance of the CTBT, we join others in urging annex 2 States to sign and ratify the Treaty as soon as possible so as to realize its entry into force.

We reiterate our commitment to preserving our region as a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. Under the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone, each State party undertakes not to test or use nuclear weapons anywhere, or to allow the testing or use of nuclear weapons anywhere inside its territory. Along with that Treaty, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons provides that States parties undertake never, under any circumstances, to develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

ASEAN welcomes the inter-Korean summits, as well as the summit between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in Singapore. We welcome the Panmunjom Declaration and the joint statement signed between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We urge all the parties concerned to continue working towards the realization of lasting peace and stability on a denuclearized Korean peninsula.

We welcome the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's stated commitment to complete denuclearization and its pledge to refrain from further nuclear and missile tests during this period. We reiterate our support for all the relevant Security Council resolutions and international efforts to bring about the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, which will contribute to peace and stability in the region.

I will now add some brief remarks on behalf of the Philippines.

The Philippines joins the international community in celebrating the International Day Against Nuclear Tests. We recognize the leadership of Kazakhstan in vigorously pursuing the purposes celebrated today. We are reminded of the importance of a concerted effort

against nuclear tests, the latest of which was conducted only last year.

Recognizing the destructive effect of nuclear testing on the environment and the horrendous effects of the use of nuclear weapons — deliberately or inadvertently, in cold calculation or panic — the Philippines signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in 1996 and deposited its instrument of ratification in 2001. The Philippines continues to support the Treaty and its full ratification as soon as possible. If nuclear weapons still hold some attraction, their lethal efficacy is already proven. What need, then, is there for tests? Further testing can only mean the progressive refinement of their yield, destructiveness, dependability of delivery and targeting accuracy.

But every step forward in those respects is a step backward in nuclear weaponry's deterrent effect, which was never so great as when nuclear-weapon stockpiles were so enormous in yield and limitless destruction that no one could contemplate their use for any purpose, thereby producing the long peace of the balance of nuclear terror. That morally repugnant benefit stands to be lost by continued testing. As those weapons become more sophisticated through improvements to their capacity for discriminating use, the temptation to use them increases and the argument for their use becomes more compelling.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Ms. Adamson (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; and the European Free Trade Association country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

Today, at this high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the occasion of the International Day against Nuclear Tests, we recall that the cessation of all nuclear-weapon test explosions and all other nuclear explosions, by constraining the development and qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and ending the development of advanced new types of nuclear weapons, constitutes an effective measure of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects. This meeting is an opportunity to highlight the need for the entry into force and universalization of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which was reaffirmed by Security Council resolution 2310 (2016). The fact that the Treaty has yet to enter into force is deeply disturbing, and the situation must be rectified.

We urge all States that have yet to sign or ratify the CTBT, and in particular the eight remaining annex 2 States, to do so without further delay. Pending the entry into force of the CTBT, we call on all States to refrain from conducting any action contrary to the object and purpose of the Treaty. In that context, we look forward to the upcoming ministerial meeting of the Group of Friends of the CTBT, to be held on 27 September on the sidelines of the high-level segment of the General Assembly. We encourage and anticipate progress with regard to signatures and ratifications of the Treaty. We welcome the fact that Thailand has completed its internal legal process to ratify the CTBT and, with the deposition of the instrument to the Secretary-General, will become the one hundred and sixty-seventh State party to the Treaty.

In accordance with several Security Council resolutions, we once again call on all States to refrain from conducting nuclear-test explosions or any other nuclear explosions. The response of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) to the six nuclear tests conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has demonstrated its invaluable role in quickly providing reliable and independent data, something that no single country alone can do, and thereby enabling the international community to react appropriately and swiftly. The recent inter-Korean high-level talks, the Panmunjom Declaration on Peace, Prosperity and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula and the joint statement issued following the Singapore summit between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are positive steps that can contribute to easing tensions on the Korean peninsula.

The EU urges the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to engage seriously in the follow-on negotiations and to take concrete steps to embark on a credible path towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization and to maintain its declared suspension of testing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. Until the Democratic People's Republic of Korea takes those concrete actions, we will continue to strictly

enforce existing sanctions. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to sign and ratify the CTBT without delay, giving legal effect to the suspension of nuclear tests and to the statement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on its interest to "join the international desire and efforts for the total halt to the nuclear test".

The EU, as a strong supporter of the international nuclear-non-proliferation and disarmament regime, hopes that the positive momentum will bring about tangible progress, leading to the verifiable closure of the nuclear test sites of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. That verification could benefit from relevant technical assistance, potentially including CTBTO expertise. The response of the International Monitoring System and the International Data Centre to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear tests confirmed that their capabilities are nearing full maturity. We therefore reiterate our full confidence in the CTBT verification regime, which has demonstrated its ability to provide independent and reliable data that will help deter non-compliance with the Treaty once it enters into force and respond to threats to international peace and security. We urge all States signatories to build all their stations and transmit their data without delay.

We recognize that even absent the entry into force of the Treaty, the monitoring and analytical elements of the verification regime are at the disposal of the international community, in conformity with the Treaty and under the guidance of the Preparatory Commission, and that such elements contribute to regional stability as a confidence-building measure and strengthen the nuclear-non-proliferation and disarmament regime.

All EU member States have signed and ratified the Treaty. Promoting its universalization and speedy entry into force is a top priority for the EU. The commitment of the EU is underscored by our seventh voluntary contribution of more than €4.5 million, approved earlier this year, which put us among the most significant financial contributors to the CTBTO, thereby enhancing its verification technologies and funding capacity-building and outreach activities. The EU and its States members also contribute to the maintenance and strengthening of the CTBT verification regime through the provision of technical support and advice at Working Group B meetings and other workshops and seminars. Regular financial contributions of our States members to the Organization amount to roughly 40 per cent of its total annual budget. We would like to remind States signatories that paying assessed contributions is not optional, and the failure to do so amounts to non-compliance with the resolution establishing the Preparatory Commission. It is essential to provide appropriate funding to all verification activities so as to maintain the effectiveness and efficiency of the verification system established by the Preparatory Commission.

Lastly, the International Day against Nuclear Tests highlights the urgent need for the entry into force of this Treaty, not only as a political imperative, but also as a concrete contribution to further strengthening international peace and security.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): On behalf of the Government of Kazakhstan, I would like to express our gratitude to everyone. I believe that this represents an expression of our shared firm commitment to achieving a world free of nuclear tests, as well as our true aspiration to ultimately build a future without nuclear threat.

In the history of our common struggle against nuclear testing, 29 August is a truly symbolic day. It was on that day in 1949 that the first Soviet atomic bomb was tested at the Semipalatinsk test site, on my country's territory. Forty-two years later, the same day became a historic one, ultimately marking the end of Soviet nuclear tests. On 29 August 1991, the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, while still an official of the Soviet Union, signed a decree shutting down the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site. Our Polygon became the first nuclear testing ground in the world to be officially shut down. Thereafter, other nuclear test sites fell silent around the globe. The President's brave and unprecedented landmark decision became a powerful political message that inspired the world. His daring and bold vision greatly contributed to the international efforts that led ultimately to the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Today is a truly international day. It demonstrates the international community's united position on designating 29 August as the International Day against Nuclear Tests. Since the adoption of resolution 64/35 in December 2009, the world community has firmly advocated for a world without nuclear threat. Twenty-seven years have passed since Kazakhstan's momentous decision. However, more than 1.5 million Kazakh victims — one of whom, Mr. Karipbek Kuyukov, addressed the Assembly earlier — continue to live with

the horrors of nuclear tests. The serious consequences of such explosions are still visible, decades later, not only in the form of severe and incurable diseases, disabilities, genetic mutations and mental trauma, but also as environmental disasters. In observing the International Day against Nuclear Tests, Kazakhstan speaks not only for Kazakhs as victims of nuclear testing, but also for the down-winders — the *hibakusha* — of Japan, the Marshall Islands, Australia and other places where people have suffered and continue to suffer today.

What is most alarming is that we are still haunted by the continuing threat of the resumption of the scourge because the final ban has unfortunately still not come into effect. The tragic pages of Kazakhstan's nuclear history are a vivid example of the fact that nuclear weapons and their consequences are incompatible with the safe and secure future of humankind. Our story is also a clear appeal for the early entry into force of the CTBT, so that no one in the world will have to repeat and suffer our destiny again.

I would call the entry into force of the CTBT one of the clearest examples we have of mutual trust and confidence. A staggering majority of the world community has demonstrated that faith and goodwill by signing and ratifying the CTBT. We still need to see the same noble action and confidence-building measures on the part of the remaining minority, in whose hands rests the final deliverance of the world from these disastrous threats.

The ongoing positive developments on the Korean peninsula prove the relevance of this approach. We commend the aspirations and practical actions of the parties that made possible the historic summits between the two Koreas and between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We appreciate Pyongyang's commitment to stopping nuclear testing, as well as to taking practical steps to eliminate the infrastructure of its nuclear test site. We hope to see this process advance further towards the country's denuclearization and joining the CTBT. We know how serious and complicated this trajectory is and Kazakhstan is ready, if necessary, to share its time-tested and proven practical experience.

For Kazakhstan, celebrating the International Day serves not only to recall the tragic consequences of nuclear weapons but also to unite the efforts of like-minded States, civil society and individuals to build a future towards global zero. Our capital annually organizes important high-level international events in support of such global efforts.

This year, from 28 August to 2 September, Kazakhstan hosted the international Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) conference under the theme "Remembering the past, looking forward to the future". It was the first time that a group of eminent persons and the CTBTO Youth Group had gathered together to discuss the way to a common future on an intergenerational basis. It is the younger generation that should fully comprehend the importance of combating this continuing threat, for they are our future warriors on the front lines for advocacy and achieving our long-sought targets.

Moreover, on 29 August in our capital, Astana, a ceremony was held to inaugurate the Wall of Peace, a landmark memorial calling us expressly to learn and remember the lessons of history. It tells us that there is no higher ideal than respect for human dignity and prosperity for all. This is another reminder to our contemporaries and to current and succeeding generations to revere peace and never again have to relive the pages of our tragic past.

I would like to conclude with the words of my President who reminded us at that ceremony that

> "[O]ur peacemaking message is, first of all, an appeal to future generations. In every possible language, we speak to our descendants, saying 'Take care of peace, for it is the most important and priceless treasure that everyone should have on Earth'".

Today I once again call on all Member States, non-governmental organizations, civil society and every citizen of the planet to work together towards a safe and secure world. This is our most important task, strengthening mutual understanding and solidarity and launching further actions advancing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The President: Before proceeding further, given the limited time available for this meeting, I urge all speakers to kindly keep their statements as brief and concise as possible.

Mr. Kickert (Austria): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting on the occasion of the International Day against Nuclear Tests.

Austria fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union.

Nationally, let me start by commending Executive Director Lassina Zerbo for his outstanding leadership, as well as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) in general for its continued efforts and excellent work. I would also like to express our appreciation for the establishment of the CTBTO office here in New York, which has already made important contributions and outreach in furthering understanding of the CTBTO's work in the New York community.

With its international monitoring system, on-site inspections and International Data Centre, the CTBTO remains the central body with regard to verifying the norm against nuclear testing. Despite the fact that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has not entered into force, more than two decades after its opening for signature, the CTBTO continues to improve its capacities and explore ways to bring its regime into full operation as soon as possible.

We warmly welcome the ratification of the CTBT by Thailand. At the same time, another year has passed without a ban on nuclear testing coming into force. That ban is a vital aspect of the international nuclear disarmament regime. Interim measures, such as moratoriums, cannot replace it. Therefore, we echo the appeal of the Secretary-General today and in his recent disarmament agenda on all remaining States whose ratifications are required for the CTBT to enter into force to commit to sign the Treaty at an early date. These States have a special responsibility to lead. I can only add, "Just do it". If we are truly committed to ending nuclear testing then we must ratify. Nice words do not count; deeds do.

While the international community continues to wait for the entry into force of the CTBT, we have seen important progress on the nuclear disarmament front. Two months ago, the Secretary-General welcomed the first anniversary of the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, on 7 July 2017, by 122 Member States — an overwhelming majority of the international community. Today, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is well on its way to entering into force. As of today, with a total of 60 signatories and 15 States parties, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is progressing faster towards entry into force than any other Treaty regarding weapons of mass destruction.

The Treaty was explicitly crafted to implement article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to be fully compatible with the CTBT. It therefore neatly slots into the international disarmament architecture. The Secretary-General confirmed this when presenting his new disarmament agenda. He affirmed that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the NPT are completely compatible and complementary. He also pointed out that it serves to motivate opponents of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons to make progress in other more limited disarmament mechanisms.

Making progress on nuclear disarmament is more urgent than ever in times of increased tensions, not least because nuclear weapons today are so much more destructive than the bombs that were dropped on Japan in 1945. The risks of nuclear weapons explosions by accident or intention have also not diminished. On the contrary, we are just damn lucky that we have been spared a nuclear catastrophe so far.

We also strongly subscribe to the Secretary-General's view that non-proliferation and disarmament go hand in hand and lead to increased security. We therefore must not delay action on disarmament under the pretext that certain conditions have to be in place first. It is especially in these times of increased tensions and the new arms race that we are witnessing that we must use disarmament and non-proliferation to start building trust and increase security for all. The CTBT, with its norm against testing, is central to that, not only by contributing to this argument and non-proliferation objectives but also by serving as an important trust-building mechanism and a way to increase security for all.

The tools to reduce insecurity and increase trust are there. Now it is up to us to make use of them and make progress towards a world free of nuclear tests and nuclear weapons, a goal to which every nation nominally subscribes. On this International Day against Nuclear Tests, let me therefore join others in calling again on the entire international community and all States Members of the United Nations to work together for a safer future for all — a future without proliferation, testing or the existence of nuclear weapons — by joining the CTBT and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Mr. Stefanile (Italy): Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union and, in its capacity as the current Chair of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) Preparatory Commission, would like to make some additional remarks.

Today's high-level meeting provides an opportunity to renew our commitment to the ultimate goal of a peaceful and secure world free of nuclear weapons. Aware of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons, we are called on to confirm our efforts for actual progress in a way that is conducive to nuclear disarmament. Italy is convinced that the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons can be attained through a progressive approach, based on concrete and verifiable measures aimed at enhancing mutual confidence and increasing the perception of solid international security. Such a process requires the substantive and constructive involvement of all relevant actors with a perspective based on the search for consensus.

Mr. Perera (Sri Lanka), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In this connection, if the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is the overarching norm on which all nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation measures are based, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) represents one of the pillars of the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation architecture established by the NPT. By banning any nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion, it counters the development and qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and helps prevent nuclear competition.

More than 20 years after its opening for signature and despite the fact that it has not entered into force yet, the CTBT has achieved two very important goals. It has paved the way for a moratorium on nuclear tests that has been implemented by every country in the world but one and, through its related organization, the CTBTO, it has created a highly effective and fully reliable global verification regime, the invaluable role of which in quickly providing trustworthy and independent data has been repeatedly demonstrated, including on the occasion of the nuclear tests that were unfortunately conducted in 2017. But progress along the way towards disarmament and non-proliferation requires the current voluntary moratorium on nuclear test explosions to be translated into a binding norm through the entry into force of the CTBT.

Italy has always been a staunch supporter of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and is deeply honoured to hold the chairmanship of the CTBTO Preparatory Commission in 2018, fully supporting Belgium and Iraq, the co-coordinators of the article XIV process, in their efforts to advance the Treaty's course. Italy joins their plea to all States that have not yet done so, and in particular the remaining eight annex 2 States, to sign and ratify the Treaty.

We hope that Security Council resolution 2310 (2016), of which Italy was a sponsor, will actually encourage further ratifications, and we look forward to the upcoming ministerial meeting of the Group of Friends of the CTBT on 27 September as a further important awareness-raising event in this respect.

In this spirit, after a deeply troubling 2017, we also welcome the statement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea about its interest in joining the international efforts to achieve a total halt to nuclear tests. We hope that such a declaration may soon lead to concrete steps towards the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, and we urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to prove its willingness to engage in credible and meaningful negotiations by returning to the NPT and signing and ratifying the CTBT.

From a purely technical point of view, the denuclearization process could also benefit from the expertise of the CTBTO. At the same time, we call on the international community to keep supporting the completion of the CTBT verification regime so as to ensure the continuous improvement of its monitoring capacity. Active collaboration between State signatories and the Provisional Technical Secretariat will be key to ensuring the timely installation, certification and maintenance of international monitoring system stations worldwide.

The current threats to global peace and security make it more pressing than ever to renew all our efforts towards the universalization and ultimate entry into force of the CTBT. Our shared commitment is crucial to reaching this goal. Each and every country has a role to play. As current CTBTO Preparatory Commission Chair, Italy invites all partners to work closely together to turn political momentum into action and eventually into reality.

Mr. Srivihok (Thailand): At the outset, I would like to align my statement with that delivered by the representative of Philippines on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

I also want to thank Kazakhstan for the initiative to declare 29 August the International Day against Nuclear Tests. This commemoration was also held at the Bangkok headquarters of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific on 24 August, through the efforts of the Kazakh Embassy in Bangkok, providing an opportunity for a solemn reflection on the tragic consequences of nuclear tests and nuclear weapons across many countries and regions. I also take this opportunity to thank Mr. Lassina Zerbo and Mr. Karipbek Kuyukov for their insightful interventions and dedication to this cause.

Thailand has always firmly recognized the importance of the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime and its critical contribution to international peace and security. Even though the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has yet to enter into force, it has already contributed significantly to cementing a global norm against nuclear tests and beyond.

I am therefore glad to share with Member States the news that in a few weeks' time, Thailand will deposit its instrument of ratification to the CTBT. At this juncture, I would like to recognize the international community for its support during our ratification process, as well as the support given to the State Audit Office of the Kingdom of Thailand in the discharge of its responsibility as External Auditor of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization for the 2018-2019 term.

Thailand will continue to do its part, including by contributing to the CTBT verification regime by hosting two international monitoring stations, promoting the early entry into force and universalization of the Treaty, and supporting the complementarity and mutually reinforcing nature of the CTBT and all other related instruments. That will contribute holistically to the realization of our shared goal of the total abolition of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Belgium welcomes the many statements of support for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) delivered today, and fully aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union.

I would also like to thank Mr. Karipbek Kuyukov for his testimony. Nothing is more important on this International Day against Nuclear Tests than giving the floor to the victims before whom we are all accountable. As coordinator with Iraq of the article XIV process, Belgium is redoubling its efforts to persuade the eight annex 2 States to accede to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and ensure the Treaty's universality. A programme of initiatives to encourage States to accede to the Treaty is being implemented, with particular importance attached to the involvement of new generations and civil society, because we believe that raising awareness at every level can help to evolve positions on the matter.

Seventy-three years after Nagasaki and Hiroshima, today's meeting is an opportunity to reiterate that nuclear tests, which have a devastating and harmful impact on people's life and health and on the environment, are unacceptable. They also represent a major obstacle to fully achieving the ultimate goal of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which is a world free of nuclear weapons.

A world without nuclear weapons requires a world without nuclear tests. The significant progress that has been made should be emphasized. Thanks to the normative effect of the Treaty, only one State in the world — North Korea — has conducted nuclear tests in the twenty-first century. Recent political developments in this case have given us grounds for optimism.

However, while the recent announcements made by North Korea give us hope for a world without nuclear weapons, only accession to the Treaty can provide a means for sustainably achieving that goal. Any comprehensive agreement to put an end to the nuclear crisis and achieve the denuclearization of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea must involve an irreversible, legally binding and verifiable end to its nuclear test programme. That will be possible if the Democratic People's Republic of Korea signs and ratifies the CTBT.

Belgium encourages the States Members of the United Nations to come together around this objective as the current global security context requires us, now more than ever before, to reaffirm the objectives of the Treaty and consolidate the global non-proliferation regime. As affirmed in the preamble of the Secretary-

General's recently published *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*, staying firmly engaged on these matters will ensure our shared future.

Mr. Sandoval Mendiolea (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico welcomes the convening of today's meeting and thanks Kazakhstan for promoting the commemoration of this International Day against Nuclear Tests, because we consider it extremely important that it can serve as a reminder of the pressing need to eliminate not just nuclear tests but nuclear weapons themselves.

Today we recall the more than 2,000 explosive nuclear tests that have been undertaken since 1945 by just eight Member States that possess nuclear weapons. We must not forget the facts or the testimonies of the victims of such tests throughout the world. We must always bear in mind the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons.

Prohibiting and eliminating nuclear testing is essential to preventing horizontal and vertical nuclear non-proliferation and to achieving and maintaining a world free of nuclear weapons. The parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons agreed by consensus that this would be the first systematic step towards nuclear disarmament. While we welcome the statements on the cessation of nuclear testing by some actors, voluntary moratoriums cannot replace the legally binding prohibition of nuclear tests and verification of that.

Mexico will continue to actively promote the total prohibition of nuclear testing within the General Assembly through the draft resolution we submit every year with Australia and New Zealand, as well as through a series of actions to promote the signature and ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) with a view to its speedy entry into force. Mexico has always defended the importance of the CTBT as a complementary instrument to the broader regime of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Like many others this morning, we regret that the CTBT has not yet come into force, more than 20 years after its opening for signature. We therefore urge the eight States whose signature and ratification are needed for it to enter into force to accede to the Treaty without conditions and in a timely manner. Nonetheless, we welcome the technical work of the Preparatory Committee of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and of those responsible for the international verification system. Their dedication and professionalism during the interim period prior to entry into force are essential to demonstrating the impartiality, robustness and credibility of the system. As previously mentioned, the cessation of nuclear testing is but one step on a longer path towards achieving total and general disarmament.

Today we can be proud of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which includes provisions compatible with the total prohibition of nuclear testing. The elimination of tests is a significant step, but it cannot serve as a substitute for tangible advances in the fulfilment of international commitments regarding nuclear disarmament, particularly for nuclear-weapon States.

The international non-proliferation and disarmament regime should be backed and respected unconditionally by all in order to expedite the achievement and maintenance of a world free of nuclear weapons. The survival of humankind depends on it.

Mr. Itegboje (Nigeria): Let me to begin by thanking the President of the General Assembly for convening this very important plenary meeting in observance of the International Day against Nuclear Tests. I would also like to thank the Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), Mr. Lassina Zerbo, and his committed team for their tireless efforts in promoting the Treaty and in building up its verification regime.

Nigeria aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Kenya on behalf of the Group of African States.

My delegation would like to recall here the adoption of resolution 64/35, which mandated the observance of the International Day against Nuclear Tests and commends the laudable initiative of the delegation of Kazakhstan. The resolution is aimed at promoting awareness of and education on the horrendous effects of nuclear test explosions and the need for their cessation, thereby providing an additional means for the achievement of a world free of nuclear weapons.

My delegation deeply regrets the fact that 21 years after its opening for signature, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has yet to enter into force. We therefore call on those who have still not signed or ratified the CTBT, especially the eight

remaining States mentioned in annex 2 of the Treaty, to do so without further delay.

Having ratified the CTBT in September 2009, Nigeria is dedicated to promoting its entry into force, and supports all efforts aimed at sustaining and generating further political momentum, as well as the public awareness needed for its promotion and entry into force. In this regard, we share the vision on ways to advance this goal within the context of non-proliferation and disarmament in order to facilitate the attainment of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The continued existence of nuclear weapons remains an existential threat to all of humankind. The cost of maintaining and modernizing these weapons is outrageous and inexcusable when compared to the resources allocated by States to more useful and productive ventures that could further the growth and peaceful development of societies.

Nigeria underscores its concern about the slow pace of progress by nuclear-weapon States in accomplishing the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals in accordance with their legal obligations and undertakings under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). In this regard, we stress that the universalization of the NPT depends on strict compliance with its three pillars — disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

My delegation seizes this opportunity to highlight once again the 1996 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (A/51/218, annex), which affirms that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons constitutes a crime against humanity and a violation of international law, including international humanitarian law.

Nigeria reiterates its view that the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that could result from either the deliberate use or the unintentional explosion of nuclear weapons should serve as a compelling reason for all States to address the question of their continued possession. Nuclear weapons remain the ultimate agents of mass destruction, and their total elimination should be the ultimate objective of all disarmament processes within the broad spectrum of goals being pursued by the United Nations. To this end, my delegation recalls with satisfaction the adoption of the landmark Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which opened for signature on 20 September 2017.

My delegation remains proud to have participated actively in the processes leading to its adoption and to have been among the first countries to sign it. Our commitment was guided by Nigeria's principled position on the denuclearization of the world. In Africa, we have long acknowledged the existential threat posed to human existence by nuclear tests. It was to that end that African countries collectively adopted the Pelindaba Treaty, renouncing the acquisition of nuclear weapons for military purposes and declaring Africa to be a nuclear-weapon-free zone to serve as a shield for the African territory, among other things by preventing the stationing of nuclear explosive devices on the continent and prohibiting the testing of such weapons in the entire space that constitutes the African continent.

Nigeria's priorities remain the civil and scientific benefits of the CTBT and its verification technologies. To this end, Nigeria takes stock of the progress made in the verification regime and would like to express its strong support for the Treaty and appreciation for the activities and work of the Preparatory Commission, including in strengthening the verification capabilities of the Treaty. My delegation is convinced that all avenues and means to end further nuclear testing will depend on the entry into force of the CTBT and its implementation.

In conclusion, we encourage the Executive Secretary, the Preparatory Commission and the Group of Friends of the CTBT to continue efforts aimed at overcoming the challenges and obtaining the signatures and ratifications necessary for the entry into force of the CTBT.

Mr. Escalante Hasbún (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I want to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting to mark the International Day against Nuclear Tests, and to thank the Permanent Mission of Kazakhstan for its work in that regard. El Salvador was proud to be a sponsor of resolution 72/51.

We believe that raising awareness about the effects of nuclear test explosions and any other type of nuclear explosion remains a valid concern and a problem that merits our particular attention. It is also an important step towards achieving the objective of a world free of nuclear weapons. El Salvador firmly believes that disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control are essential to upholding our commitment to maintaining international peace, security and stability,

centred around respect for human rights and the potential harmful humanitarian effects of the use of such weapons.

For my country, the existence of nuclear weapons remains a serious threat to humankind. As we all know, their use, whether deliberate or as a result of human error, would have consequences so catastrophic that no State or organization would be capable of addressing. That is why, as a country that abides by international law, and pursuant to article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), we welcomed the adoption and opening for signature of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which my country was pleased to ratify on 30 July and whose entry into force we eagerly await, since it is the first instrument of international law to prohibit these types of indiscriminate weapons, the only ones not regulated by international legislation, and the most deadly. It is neither ethical, moral or logical that two types of weapons of mass destruction — chemical and biological — are prohibited under international law, while many States base their security on the existence and potential use of a third type of weapon of mass destruction that is just as devastating, if not more.

Nuclear tests serve no function other than to undermine international peace, security and stability and endanger the lives of millions of people. Moreover, they run counter to the objective and purpose of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime, and to the obligations and provisions contained in the NPT.

My delegation takes this opportunity, as many others have done, to reiterate the importance of and need for the swift entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which is an important, indeed indispensable component of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime, together with the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, other instruments already in force, and still others that for political reasons remain in the draft phase or have not entered into force.

My Government also takes this opportunity to express its concern and disappointment at the degree of divergence that characterized the discussions on the nuclear topic in the recent work of the First Committee. We hope that universal interests will prevail over individual ones when we embark on the new session in September. We also call on CTBT annex 2 States to expedite the signing and ratification of that instrument. At the same time, we urge States to refrain from preparing or carrying out nuclear tests, non-explosive tests or subcritical tests, even those conducted through simulations, and all actions aimed at developing or improving nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. My country welcomes all the efforts of the international community to put an end to nuclear tests.

Finally, we would like to give special recognition to the role that non-governmental organizations, civil society, academic entities, think tanks and the media have played, together with Governments, in promoting this goal and that of the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly. We also express our deep appreciation to Secretary-General António Guterres for his statement, and thank Mr. Lassina Zerbo, Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), and Mr. Karipbek Kuyukov, Honorary Ambassador of the ATOM Project, for their testimonies.

My country's delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the Sultanate of Oman on behalf of the Group of African States.

History has demonstrated incontrovertibly that an arms race in all its forms is highly destructive for humankind, claims a vast number of human lives, destroys the environment and nature, and leads to suffering in many areas of life. In that regard, my Government reiterates the importance of making every effort to achieve the final and complete elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in order to build a world free of such disastrous weapons. In that way, we can secure a safe and prosperous future for us and future generations. That will require us to pool our efforts to achieve the desired goals.

There is a growing risk that terrorist groups will gain access to the nuclear technology and material needed for the production of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Nuclear terrorism is one of the most dangerous threats to international security. Strict nuclear security measures are necessary to prevent access to nuclear material by terrorists and other unauthorized entities.

As a co-facilitator, with the Kingdom of Belgium, of article XIV of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-

Ban Treaty (CTBT), my Government believes that the ratification of the eight annex 2 States is needed as soon as possible so that the CTBT can enter into force as a legal instrument to enhance the non-proliferation regime. In addition, the ratification by one of those eight States in particular, the Israeli entity, would open the way to another path that would be of interest to the international community, and specifically to the Middle East. It would also represent a step in the right direction towards the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. We all know that the Middle East is a hotspot that needs Israel to exercise the greatest possible wisdom and reason by joining and ratifying the relevant international and legal instruments. That would help to defuse tensions, given the fact that all other parties in the Middle East have already ratified the first of those instruments, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

The importance of the CTBT and the NPT lies in their three interconnected pillars — disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. They are the cornerstones of the non-proliferation regime. In addition to the political and moral obligations it entails, the entry into force of the CTBT would make it a legally binding instrument that would enhance the effectiveness of the non-proliferation regime and support efforts to establish zones free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, including in the Middle East.

Iraq is a co-Chair, with the Kingdom of Belgium, of the tenth Conference on Facilitating Entry into Force of the CTBT from 2017 to 2019. In addition, Iraq chaired the First Committee during this session. We therefore want to highlight our diligent efforts in the area of disarmament aimed at enhancing international peace and security, as well as fighting and ultimately vanquishing the terrorist gangs of Da'esh and terrorism in general.

My country's ratification of the CTBT on 26 September 2013 was based on the conviction that we must completely eliminate nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction in accordance with paragraph E of article 9 of the Constitution of the Republic of Iraq. That is a clear indication that Iraq is meeting its international obligations in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation, and aimed at the maintenance of international peace and security.

My Government is aware that enhancing the universalization of all conventions and treaties related to nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and complete compliance with them, without discrimination, while fully eliminating such weapons, is key to the international community's ability to guarantee an end to the use or threat of use of weapons of mass destruction, which would help to ensure a safe and sound future for our communities and coming generations. On that basis, my country's delegation voted in favour of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, adopted in July 2017, which we believe was the culmination of the tireless efforts of Member States over the past 20 years.

In conclusion, as a co-facilitator of article XIV of the CTBT, alongside the Kingdom of Belgium, my delegation reiterates that we are ready to cooperate with the international community to accelerate the entry into force of the Treaty so that we can establish a world without nuclear tests, thereby strengthening international peace and security.

Mrs. Rodríguez Camejo (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the convening of today's high-level meeting and thank Kazakhstan for promoting and working assiduously to convene it.

Cuba reiterates its deep concern about the growing danger posed by the existence of nuclear weapons and their threat to the survival of humankind. It is very worrying that nuclear-weapon States have lowered the threshold for considering the use of such weapons, including in response to so-called non-nuclear strategic threats. Equally alarming is the strengthening of the role of nuclear weapons in their military defence and security doctrines, thereby accelerating rearmament and a nuclear arms race, which could put humankind on the verge of a nuclear conflict, with dire repercussions. It is worrisome that nuclear-weapon States continue to develop new nuclear-weapon systems and modernize existing ones, particularly through subcritical testing and sophisticated methods, and are considering resuming nuclear explosion tests.

In the context of the commemoration of the International Day against Nuclear Tests, Cuba reaffirms its position against all types of nuclear-weapon tests — not only explosion tests but also those carried out by subcritical and other sophisticated methods. We support their total and effective prohibition, as well as

the closure and dismantling of all facilities used for such purposes and the associated infrastructure.

Cuba is honoured to have been the fifth State to ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which — in addition to declaring nuclear weapons and the so-called doctrine of nuclear deterrence illegal, and providing a framework for the total and complete elimination of those weapons — also prohibits all types of tests. We encourage the signature and ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons with a view to achieving its entry into force as soon as possible, as well as participation at the highest level at the meeting on 26 September to commemorate the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

We have a moral responsibility to raise awareness of the threat posed by nuclear weapons and to work for a world free of those weapons, for the benefit of present and future generations. We appreciate the contribution made by the Secretary-General with his disarmament agenda, on which the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the highest priority in the area of disarmament.

Mr. Yu Peng (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the President for convening this meeting. It is in the common interest of all humankind to achieve the complete prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons, eliminate the threat of nuclear warfare and build a world free of nuclear weapons. Since the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) more than 20 years ago, it has become a main pillar of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation system and has made indelible contributions to forestalling a nuclear arms race, reducing the threat of nuclear war and safeguarding world peace and security.

Today the world is going through profound changes, while security challenges and risks to global strategic balance and stability are rising. Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation represent a long and arduous journey. Given the new situation, all countries need to embrace a vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, seek universal security and eliminate the root causes of the existence and proliferation of nuclear weapons. They must also create an international security environment conducive to the Treaty's entry into force.

It is important to consolidate institution-building, avoid double standards and jointly maintain the authority and effectiveness of the existing international nuclear non-proliferation system. Stronger political impetus is needed, in that the permanent five members of the Security Council must continue to honour their commitment to a moratorium on nuclear tests, while all other countries need to give their full and complete support to the Treaty.

China has always stood for the complete prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons. China is committed to unconditionally adopting a policy of no first use of nuclear weapons, and opposes the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones. As one of the earliest signatories, China shares the object and purpose of the CTBT, abides by its commitment to the moratorium and supports all relevant General Assembly resolutions and Security Council resolution 2310 (2016). China has actively engaged in international efforts to push for the entry into force of the CTBT, and our top priority is preparing for the implementation of the Treaty. In recent years, China has made major progress in the construction, testing and certification of monitoring stations within China.

China will continue to work with all stakeholders for the early entry into force of the CTBT and to make unremitting efforts to attain the goal of the complete prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Prasad (Fiji): I thank the President for convening this important meeting, as well as Kazakhstan, for making it happen. Fiji is grateful for the opportunity to participate today. We have witnessed the terrifying and tragic effects of nuclear-weapon testing in the Pacific region.

The issue of the total elimination of nuclear weapons has been on our international agenda since 1946, when the General Assembly adopted its first resolution (resolution 1(I)), which called for the elimination of nuclear weapons. Seventy-two years later, we are still at it. We must stay at it with renewed urgency in these troubled times until the job is done, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is ratified and in force, and all testing has ceased.

Fiji has actively joined the call for this because we know first-hand what it means to be at the front lines of nuclear testing. Between 1957 and 1958, when Fiji was still a colony, several hundred Fijian soldiers participated

against their will in nuclear-testing activities held in the Pacific. Almost all have passed away, most of them in tragic health circumstances, having been denied support and recognition by the authorities of the time. We are not alone in that. Across the Pacific, whole communities were deliberately or indirectly exposed to nuclear testing on land, sea or in the air, in highly fragile environments or in earthquake zones.

Across the region, we know first-hand what human suffering that causes. The tragedy that it causes lives with us. I remember and pay tribute to all those who lost their lives, suffered and were denied the support they so needed. The human and environmental impact of nuclear testing within the Pacific is not confined to the past. It is a persistent threat to our pursuit of sustainable development today, most notably to the Sustainable Development Goals relating to health and well-being, gender equality and the environment on land and in the oceans.

Around 300 nuclear tests took place in French Polynesia between 1966 and 1974. We are ever grateful to the Assembly, and to our predecessors who occupied these benches, for bringing the attention of the world to that tragedy in the Pacific. Fiji's radiation monitoring stations at the time detected a stratospheric fallout from the tests throughout the period. None of the countries, however, had the means to monitor the nuclear leakages from the subsea tests that followed. The health problems that many Pacific countries face as a result, and the impact on marine life and on fragile subsea structures, are largely unknown and remain insufficiently researched. We do not know the impact of warming oceans as a result of climate change. Fiji is extremely concerned about the venting and leaching of radiation from test sites.

The peoples of the Pacific and their leaders have fought hard for an end to nuclear testing and for a nuclear-free world. Fiji is party to the Treaty of Rarotonga, which formalized the nuclear-weapon-free-zone in the South Pacific and came into force in 1986. The Treaty bans the use, testing or possession of nuclear weapons within the borders of the zone.

We are honoured to have been among the first States to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, in 1996. We are proud to be a signatory to the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. That Treaty frames nuclear weapons as an affront to humankind, and the humanitarian, human rights and environmental effects of nuclear-weapon use and testing are therefore the responsibility of humankind as a whole. The Treaty offers a crucial new international framework for addressing the devastating legacy of nuclear testing in the Pacific. On this significant day, Fiji urges the United Nations system to use the opportunities created by the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons to assess the effects on health and human rights, as well as the humanitarian and environmental impact, of nuclear-weapon testing in the Pacific, and to develop action plans to address that.

Before I conclude, it would be remiss of me if I did not commend and express my appreciation to our guests, Mr. Zerbo and Mr. Kuyukov. Fiji appreciates and joins its colleagues in commending them for the leadership, wisdom and inspiration they shared with us this morning.

Mr. Carazo Zeledón (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this important meeting; the Secretary-General for his support for this cause, as demonstrated by his presence and the statement he delivered at this commemoration today, as well as his work in this area, reflected in his report *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*; and Mr. Zerbo and Mr. Kuyukov for their inspiring statements.

We meet once again for the commemoration of the International Day against Nuclear Tests, remembering the victims of the terrible consequences of the testing and use of nuclear weapons. This is a new opportunity to remind the world of the danger that nuclear weapons pose to humankind, the environment and international stability and security.

We believe that today we have grounds for greater optimism, since our achievement, as an international community, of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Its adoption represents a historic milestone on the crucial path to nuclear disarmament and a sign of hope for humankind. This new instrument is also a well-deserved tribute to all victims of the use or testing of nuclear weapons, and with its adoption we bear witness to their continued tenacity and moral standing. This is a first step towards banning and ultimately eliminating nuclear weapons and their unacceptable humanitarian consequences. Today, barely a year after its adoption, 60 States have signed the Treaty and 15 have ratified it. We are on the right track, and we invite

all States to finalize their ratification processes in order to reach the 50 ratifications necessary to ensure the Treaty's entry into force and thereby bring us closer to a world free of nuclear weapons.

The primary objective of our actions has always been the same — the ethical imperative of nuclear disarmament so that humankind will never again have to face the catastrophic consequences of the use of nuclear weapons or the risks of detonation by accident or design. We have consistently rejected the false premise that nuclear weapons contribute to defence and security. Nuclear weapons have always been and will continue to be an element of insecurity for humankind. They must therefore be broadly rejected.

We also condemn the vertical and technological proliferation of nuclear weapons, which, far from eliminating the risk of a nuclear catastrophe, actually exacerbates it. That threat is incompatible with international law and especially international humanitarian law. We also want to repeat that international non-proliferation obligations must be complied with, in particular by nuclear-weapon States. We must focus our efforts on ending nuclear testing, with the ultimate goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons, and to that end the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is essential. We again urge those States that have not yet ratified the CTBT, especially the eight States that have been mentioned this morning, to do so as soon as possible.

We reiterate our call for all of us to join together in this endeavour, especially in today's circumstances, where international peace and security depend on it. Costa Rica has always believed that this task is everyone's responsibility, and that as we have seen, persevering in this struggle is worthwhile.

Mr. Ngundze (South Africa): My delegation would like to thank the President for organizing this meeting.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Kenya on behalf of the Group of African States.

My delegation welcomes the convening of this high-level meeting to commemorate the International Day against Nuclear Tests as a unique opportunity for the international community to highlight the dangers and threats that nuclear tests pose to international peace and security and pay tribute to the victims of nuclear-weapon-test explosions. As we commemorate this important day on the calendar of the General Assembly, it is appropriate to reflect on the current challenges and opportunities related to their realization and to the strengthening of the global norm against nuclear tests and nuclear disarmament in general.

This year's commemoration is taking place against a backdrop of deep concerns about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of a nuclear-weapon detonation, whether by accident or design. Those concerns have been further heightened by the escalating horizontal development of nuclear arsenals and their means of delivery perpetuated by some States that possess them. My delegation would like to use this year's commemoration against nuclear tests to urge nuclear-weapon States and those possessing such weapons to work urgently to make progress towards the achievement of the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

My delegation is of the firm view that today's commemoration should be a constant reminder of the importance of the entry into force and the universalization of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as a cornerstone of our collective endeavours to prevent both the vertical and the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons, and as a solid foundation for the achievement of a world free of nuclear weapons. In that context, we want to join the sentiment that has been shared during this meeting by expressing our concerns about the lack of progress in the ratification of the CTBT, in particular by the eight remaining annex 2 States, which has been mentioned by many speakers this morning. South Africa believes that a failure to bring the CTBT into force will weaken and undermine the nuclear-non-proliferation and disarmament machinery and thereby deal a heavy blow to the international community's quest for a world free from the threat of nuclear devastation.

We have repeatedly expressed our view that until the CTBT has entered into force, it is essential for countries to continued to observe a moratorium on nuclear explosions, but that moratorium should not seek to become a viable long-term substitute for a legally binding commitment. South Africa will continue to play an active role in the work of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) both from a technical and political perspective.

In conclusion, South Africa commends the work of the Executive Secretary, His Excellency Mr. Lassina

Zerbo, and his team, in Vienna and New York, for their tireless efforts to promote the universalization of the Treaty and ensure that the work of the CTBTO Preparatory Commission continues unabated despite the existing challenges.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): First of all, we would like to align ourselves with the statement delivered earlier by the Permanent Representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

As a prelude, I would like to echo the very important point that the Secretary-General made in his message earlier this morning:

> "The catastrophic impact of nuclear testing has had profound effects on the environment, human health, food security and economic development."

That point was also echoed a few moments ago by my colleague the Permanent Representative of Fiji, when he said that the nuclear testing in the Pacific in the past was a threat to sustainable development. We share that very important view.

The building of global political momentum against the testing and possession of nuclear weapons and for their complete elimination is a joint responsibility about which we must be clear and resolute. There can never be a moral justification for testing or retaining those immoral weapons. As we remember that crucial message, let us intensify the effort to refrain from conducting nuclear tests and to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world through concrete actions and policies.

One might have thought that in the wake of the devastation heaped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the more than 2,000 nuclear tests conducted in the ensuing 70 years, with their unacceptable human, environmental and economic costs, that such test explosions would no longer exist. That is not the case. Some realities are very grim. Despite the multilateral instruments we have against nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, nuclear weapons have been modernized, with greater zeal for such weapons on the part of some. Not so long ago, the international community witnessed reckless threats of the use of nuclear weapons. The desire for confrontation has been greater than the desire for adherence to global norms, responsible dialogue and disarmament.

Indonesia is concerned about those negative trends. As a country that long ago decided to choose the non-nuclear-weapon path, Indonesia urges States that possess and test nuclear weapons, along with those States under nuclear security umbrellas, to fulfil their disarmament obligations. They have a higher responsibility to meet their commitments and foster a peaceful and safe international climate. It cannot be a one-way street. Disregard for disarmament commitments invites proliferation risks and fatal instability.

The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is an essential building block for a nuclear-weapon-free world. It should be expedited. Indonesia has fulfilled its responsibilities, including ratification of the CTBT. We call on the remaining annex 2 States to fulfil theirs. There should be a cessation of all nuclear-weapon testing, along with their complete prohibition and elimination of such weapons. Our Earth must not be forced to suffer further environmental damage and radiation from nuclear weapons. In that context, last year's historic adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons also manifests strong international resolve. We need to all play our role to help universalize it.

It would be remiss of us not to commend the vital activism of civil-society groups in expanding awareness on the dangers of nuclear-test explosions. Their contribution is indispensable. Indonesia also thanks the Secretary-General for presenting *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. Its advancement will also bolster political advocacy against nuclear testing.

Let me conclude by reiterating that our respective actions and policies should ensure that today's message is carried forward robustly. This is not about a single day, but an ongoing process that requires vigorous contributions and support from all stakeholders. Indonesia, for its part, will continue to engage with everyone to help ensure that the multilateral edifice concerning nuclear tests, disarmament and non-proliferation stands strong and delivers. A nuclear-weapon-free world is freedom, including from an apocalypse. Let us all be free.

Ms. Mac Loughlin (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this high-level meeting of the General Assembly and for the opportunity it offers Member States to commemorate the International Day against Nuclear Tests. I would also like to express my gratitude for the presence and participation of the Secretary-

General, the Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and, in particular, the artist Karipbek Kuyukov, whose words have moved us and prompted us to reflect.

The commemoration that brings us together today, on the anniversary of the closing of the Semipalatinsk Polygon nuclear test site, on 29 August 1991, is an excellent opportunity to reflect on the devastating effects of nuclear tests and the importance of eliminating them comprehensively and absolutely unconditionally. We therefore congratulate the delegation of Kazakhstan on the new impetus given to the commemoration of this day through the adoption of resolution 72/51, on 4 December 2017.

While we welcome the high-level dialogue initiated by the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, we believe that the only viable solution is the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula in a transparent, verifiable and irreversible manner.

More than 20 years have passed since the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Although it is a key element of the non-proliferation system, we have not yet achieved the ratifications required for its entry into force. There can be no doubt that we should redouble our efforts in seeking and developing resources that will bring us closer to that goal. We agree with the view espoused by the Secretary-General in *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*, which says that for the norm against nuclear tests to retain its robustness, the institutions that underpin it must enter into force without further delay.

The CTBT is a crucial tool for curbing the manufacturing and modernization of existing nuclear weapons and the development of new prototypes. However, until it enters into force, there is no legally binding instrument that fully bans such tests. Although the suspension of nuclear tests adopted by the five permanent members of the Security Council aims to have a positive impact on matters concerning non-proliferation, it cannot be considered an acceptable substitute for the CTBT's entry into force.

Argentina is deeply committed to strengthening and optimizing the International Monitoring System and the International Data Centre of the CTBT. In that regard, Argentina hosts six monitoring stations within its borders and is planning to set up two others in the future. The Treaty's International Monitoring System is of the utmost importance to my country, which believes that prohibition must always be complemented by a robust verification system. Thanks to the CTBT's International Monitoring System, the chances today that any one country could carry out nuclear tests secretly, behind the international community's back, are highly unlikely. The tremendous political, legal and economic efforts that have been made must therefore culminate in the Treaty's entry into force. In that regard, as it has done historically, the Republic of Argentina will continue advocating for the CTBT's speedy entry into force, while urging States that have yet to ratify it to reconsider their positions so as to contribute to building a safer world.

Mr. Bermúdez Álvarez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate and are grateful for the statements delivered by the President of the General Assembly; the Secretary-General; Mr. Lassina Zerbo, Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization; and Mr. Karipbek Kuyukov, Honorary Ambassador of the ATOM Project.

As a pacifist and non-nuclear-weapon State, Uruguay has a deep-rooted tradition of advocating for universal and complete disarmament. In addition to other international instruments, my country is party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, known as the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

Uruguay believes that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is a key component in the disarmament and nuclear-non-proliferation regime and contributes to strengthening the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In 2016, Uruguay voted in favour of Security Council resolution 2310 (2016), which commemorated the twentieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and promoted its universalization and entry into force.

Today's meeting helps raise awareness of the effects of nuclear explosions and the need to end them, and recalls the importance of ensuring that the CTBT enters into force without further delay, which would be a crucial step in promoting disarmament and non-proliferation, both horizontally and vertically.

At the same time, the Treaty is vital to preventing the contamination of the environment caused by radioactive substances and the consequent detrimental effects on health and ecosystems. We therefore call once again on the remaining eight States listed under annex 2 to the Treaty that have yet to sign or ratify it to do so, in order not to delay its entry into force any longer. We also call on the international community to continue to comply with the Treaty's principles and obligations, despite the fact that its entry into force is pending, as it is essential to respect the moratorium on nuclear-weapon or any other nuclear explosions. We also believe that it is important to stress the fact that at the recently held international conference on nuclear non-proliferation held in Astana, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was brought up in connection with its contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals and the existing link between disarmament and development.

The commemoration that brings us together today is a fitting occasion for reiterating Uruguay's firm commitment to strengthening the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Accordingly, on 25 July, Uruguay deposited its instrument of ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, becoming the thirteenth country to ratify that important instrument. In its relations with other States, Uruguay favours cooperation, mutual trust and transparency over confrontation, distrust and the build-up of armaments. In that spirit, and in accordance with the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and under international law, Uruguay is determined to continue to work towards the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, thereby continuing efforts to achieve the goal of universal and complete disarmament. That is the only way we can strengthen international peace and security and move forward on a path towards building a safer world for all.

Mr. Giacomelli da Silva (Brazil): The delegation of Brazil would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this high-level meeting, and the Secretary-General for his statement. We would also like to congratulate the delegation of Kazakhstan on its efforts to raise awareness of this important date by introducing the draft resolution that became resolution 72/51. Brazil extends its appreciation to Executive Secretary Lassina Zerbo for his tireless efforts and leadership in promoting the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and its continued international relevance. We would also like to express our appreciation for the important work carried out by the Provisional Technical Secretariat in building up the verification regime and carrying out efforts aimed at its universalization. The credibility of the CTBT verification system ensures the Treaty's continued relevance.

Brazil reaffirms its condemnation of any kind of experiment aimed at developing or modernizing nuclear weapons, through explosive tests or any other means, including subcritical tests. Such activities are contrary to the purpose and the spirit of the CTBT. More than ever, significant steps are needed to ensure the entry into force of the CTBT, an end to all forms of nuclear tests and the total and irreversible elimination of all nuclear arsenals within a specified time frame. A genuine undertaking to live up to the CTBT's goals is essential to the credibility and sustainability of the nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament regime. We must redouble our efforts to explore all avenues towards accession for the remaining eight annex 2 States. In that regard, I want to affirm our sincere appreciation for the work of the Permanent Missions to the United Nations of Belgium and Iraq in coordinating the article XIV process in Vienna.

A little more than a year ago, we witnessed a breakthrough in the international nuclear-disarmament agenda. The conclusion of the negotiations on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was a victory for principled hope over apathy and equivocation. The humanitarian consequences resulting not only from the use but also from tests involving nuclear weapons contributed to raising awareness of the importance of the Treaty. The conviction that led Brazil to be the first country to sign the Treaty continues to guide our unwavering commitment to the Treaty and the values it represents. Only by prohibiting nuclear weapons and providing for their transparent, verifiable and irreversible elimination can we confidently look forward to a future when they will never be employed again, under any circumstances, by any actor.

Mr. Khoshroo (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, I thank the President for convening this meeting. I would also like to join other representatives in thanking Kazakhstan for its efforts with regard to the observance of the International Day against Nuclear Tests. The courageous decision by the Government of Kazakhstan to close down all nuclear test sites on its

territory was undoubtedly a bold and exemplary step in the right direction.

Today we are commemorating the victims of nuclear tests, the people who have suffered and, thanks to the long-lasting nature of radioactive fallout, will continue to suffer from the devastating effects of nuclear tests, and most of whom were not citizens of the countries that carried out those tests. The observance of this Day is also an indication of the international community's willingness to protect the environment against the destructive effects of such tests, most of them carried out outside the territory of the countries conducting them. Moreover, the observance of this Day as an international event is a reflection of the international community's long-standing desire to end nuclear-weapon tests as one of the requirements of achieving the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

At a time when all nuclear-weapon possessors have plans to further modernize and upgrade or extend the lives of their nuclear weapons and related facilities, as well as to develop new nuclear weapons that are easier to use, ending nuclear-weapon testing is of the utmost importance. Nuclear-weapon States have the primary responsibility in that regard, and they should adopt practical measures to stop all nuclear-weapon tests. As a signatory to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Islamic Republic of Iran firmly believes that all nuclear-weapon tests in any form must be strictly prohibited, including through simulation using supercomputers and subcritical testing.

In conclusion, I want to stress that pursuing the noble objective of halting nuclear-weapon tests is our common responsibility, whose realization requires our perseverance, steadfastness and unity. Let us remain resolute along that path and remain confident that it is not impossible.

Mr. Bin Momen (Bangladesh): We thank the President for convening this high-level event to commemorate and promote the International Day against Nuclear Tests. We appreciate the insights shared with us by the Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) and the Honorary Ambassador of the ATOM Project.

Following five decades of struggle against nuclear testing, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) was humankind's first hopeful step towards a comprehensive, globally verifiable non-proliferation regime banning any and all nuclear testing. In 1996, within 30 days of its adoption, Bangladesh, an annex 2 State, demonstrated its full faith in the CTBT when it became the first Member State from South Asia to sign and ratify the Treaty. Bangladesh remains robustly bound by its Constitution to pursue the goal and guarantee of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We remain convinced that nuclear weapons, nuclear deterrence and the honing of nuclear weapons have no place in our national security or foreign policy architecture. That also guided Bangladesh's recent decision to sign on to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Bangladesh joins the 166 States parties to the CTBT in urging Member States that have yet to sign or ratify the Treaty to do so without further delay. We are heartened by Thailand's decision to ratify the Treaty. The non-ratification of the CTBT by the eight remaining annex 2 States continues to hinder its entry into force and prevent the permanent banning of nuclear tests conducted by anyone, anywhere. Unlike unilateral, voluntary moratoriums on nuclear testing, we consider the Treaty's entry into force to be the only guarantee of a legally binding non-testing regime. We support the Treaty's article XIV process to facilitate the entry into force of the CTBT and look forward to further pursuing the issue at the upcoming meeting on the margins of the general debate of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. We thank the Secretary-General for reaffirming the importance of the CTBT's entry into force in his recently published *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*.

We welcome the advances made by the CTBTO in building a strong verification regime by developing and effectively maintaining a system capable of quickly, reliably and precisely detecting nuclear explosions and suspicious events anywhere — in the air, the sea or underground. Bangladesh hosts an auxiliary seismic station and remains committed to further strengthening the verification regime.

In conclusion, Bangladesh welcomes the announcement by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that it plans to halt nuclear testing and hopes the announcement will pave the way for the comprehensive, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. In that context, we appreciate the various high-level diplomatic engagements and pronouncements, and we emphasize following up on them in order to reach the desired end.

Mr. Prieto (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to thank the President for convening this meeting to commemorate the International Day against Nuclear Tests.

Peru is party to all the existing multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation instruments. They represent one of the pillars of our foreign policy and attest to our determination to achieve international peace and security through general and complete disarmament. In line with our principled position, we were one of the promoters of the establishment of the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in the world, via the Treaty of Tlatelolco, and we have signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Our firm position led us to become one of the first States to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), as well as the second annex 2 State to implement it. The CTBT is a key instrument in the context of international efforts to gradually reduce the number of nuclear weapons and prevent nuclear proliferation, which is why its entry into force should not be delayed.

Since the first nuclear test was carried out, in 1945, there have been almost 2,000 such tests. Although at the time the possession of nuclear weapons was considered to be a demonstration of scientific sophistication and military power, without consideration for its devastating effects on human lives, the international community today is aware that, of all weapons, nuclear weapons are the most destructive, inhumane and indiscriminate.

What does not exist can do no harm. Nuclear weapons should simply not exist. My country will continue to work to ban such weapons in all circumstances and to eliminate them in order to prevent their attendant humanitarian impact. In its awareness of and commitment to that goal, my country actively participated in the negotiations that led to the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We stated our objection to nuclear tests and to all strategic concepts of defence and security that justify the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

We emphatically condemn the nuclear tests carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its repeated illegal launches of ballistic missiles, which are in clear violation of Security Council resolutions and a threat to international peace and security. We also reiterated our support for a negotiated political solution to denuclearize the Korean peninsula during our participation in the Security Council.

Peru is aware that in recent years we have made progress in various areas covered by the Treaty that are essential to its implementation. Nevertheless, almost 22 years have elapsed since its adoption and the Treaty has not yet entered into force. We must take on that task and responsibility, given its importance to all humankind.

We would be remiss if we did not call on all States whose signature or ratification is required for the Treaty's entry into force to fulfil their obligations, and we express our willingness to enact every measure necessary to ensure its implementation as soon as possible.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the Observer State of the Holy See.

Monsignor Grech (Holy See): The Holy See has called for a total ban on nuclear weapons since the dawn of the nuclear age. In February 1943, two and a half years before the Trinity test, Pope Pius XII had already voiced deep concern regarding the violent use of atomic energy. After Hiroshima and Nagasaki, upon observing the totally uncontrollable and indiscriminate consequences of nuclear weapons, Pope Pius XII demanded an effective proscription of atomic warfare. The Holy See echoes the cry for humankind to be freed from the spectre of nuclear warfare, and therefore actively supports all initiatives that contribute toward a world free of nuclear weapons. Banning nuclear tests is a giant step to that end.

Today's commemoration and promotion of the International Day against Nuclear Tests is an important affirmation of our common determination to create the necessary conditions and steps towards the legal proscription of nuclear tests. For that reason, the Holy See continues to call for the rapid entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). When the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty met in 2003, 168 States had signed and 104 States had ratified the Treaty. Today, 183 States have signed and 166 have ratified it. Those numbers show that the great majority of States want the CTBT to enter into force in order to put an end to nuclear tests. Its entry into force would be a significant step towards a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Yet that step is impeded by the lack of universality. The Holy See therefore adds its voice to the appeal to States whose ratification is necessary for the entry into force of the Treaty. Twenty-two years have passed since

the Treaty was opened for signature and ratification. The entry into force of the CTBT can happen only if mutual trust exists, especially among those States whose ratification is necessary for the Treaty's entry into force. Disarmament treaties are more than just legal obligations; they are also moral commitments, based on trust between States and rooted in the trust that citizens place in their Governments. All must contribute to building and consolidating the trust necessary for a world free of nuclear weapons. The entry into force of the CTBT will be a cornerstone of the mutual trust we need.

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 99.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.